

# THE DEATH PENALTY FOR DRUG OFFENCES:

## GLOBAL OVERVIEW 2025



### MINIMUM CONFIRMED EXECUTIONS FOR DRUG OFFENCES (2016-2025)

- At least 1,212 people were **executed for drug offences** worldwide (excluding figures from China, Vietnam and North Korea). This represents a 97% increase from 2024, and the highest figure reported since HRI started monitoring drug-related executions in 2007.
- Drug offences were responsible for **over 46% of all executions confirmed globally**.
- Drug-related **executions increased by 97% between 2024 and 2025 in both Iran and Saudi Arabia**. Foreign nationals and people from ethnic minorities remain overrepresented among those executed.
- Drug-related **executions were confirmed in five countries** (China, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Singapore). Executions are assumed to have been carried out in North Korea and Vietnam, but state secrecy and censorship prevent a minimum figure from being confirmed.
- Two countries (Algeria and the Maldives) amended their laws to **introduce the death penalty for certain drug offences**. For the first time in over a decade, the number of countries retaining the death penalty for drug offences increased – up to a total of 36.
- **331 death sentences for drug offences** were confirmed in 18 countries – one country more than in 2024.
- At least **2,450 people** (likely hundreds more) **are on death row** for drug offences in 22 countries.
- Confirmed figures are likely a gross underestimate of the actual number of drug-related executions and death sentences. This is due to a **persistent lack of transparency**, and censorship on information about the use of the death penalty.

